

Q&A on New Animal Shelter Project

By ANN ELDRIDGE

Why do we need a new animal shelter?

Stop by Duxbury's current animal shelter, located behind the DPW buildings on Tremont Street – you'll find the answer to this question! The town's existing dark, cramped, cinder block structure entirely lacks proper ventilation. It's cold in the winter, hot in the summer, and damp all the time. The dog pens are tiny and there's no room at all for cats, who right now must be isolated in an outdoor area surrounded by chicken wire. The shelter lacks space for even the barest essentials in animal control – like a sink, an isolation room for new or sick animals, and storage for food and bedding.

Why can't we just fix up the old one?

DPW Director Tom Daley has already looked into this and feels there's nothing in the old shelter worth saving. In order to renovate it, you'd have to tear down the entire structure and start over. The shelter doesn't have a septic system, so we'd have to put a new one in anyway. And the site of the old shelter is inappropriate for Duxbury's needs. It's too close to surrounding homes and there's not enough room at the site to expand outdoor run areas.

What do we need a shelter for anyway?

Even with strictly enforced leash laws, the fact remains that pets get out. Dogs jump the fence, cats sneak out when the door is left open a crack ... even among the most conscientious pet owners, escapes happen. And when these animals are found, they don't always wear identification collars or tags. So they need to be held – in a safe, humane place – until their owners can be located.

Are we going into the animal adoption business here in Duxbury?

No. Lt. Banfill, the Duxbury police officer who handles animal control, has worked out a system that seems to make sense for the town. Dogs/cats are held for two weeks, during which time our animal control officer, Matt Riggins, makes every effort to find the owner. If the owner cannot be found during that time, the pets will be taken to the nearby Animal Rescue League facility in Pembroke, where adoption avenues will be pursued. On a case by case basis, Matt may pursue adoption within Duxbury as well.

How many animals does Duxbury need to house in any given week?

Lt. Banfill spent a considerable amount of time this summer going over animal control records for the past few years. He has determined that we generally have anywhere from one to four dogs in the shelter at any one time. We aren't able to pin

down the number of cats, since it varies so widely due to the feral cat problem in town.

Where will this facility be located?

The new site for the shelter is in a secluded hollow behind the current DPW buildings, directly behind the First Parish Church but well back into the woods. This location will significantly reduce the noise problem that plagues our current shelter.

How much will it cost?

Our building will be an economical, pre-fab structure, a smaller version of the Kingston animal shelter, built just last year. That facility cost \$175,000 and came in slightly over budget. Because the bidding process for a modular structure in the municipal sector requires only a footprint, not full-blown plans, we can only estimate the building's costs right now. So we're using Kingston's budget — \$175,000 — as our goal, although we're hoping our building will cost less.

Where will the money come from?

Friends of the Duxbury Animal Shelter is committed to raising \$100,000 towards the new facility. The remaining \$75,000 will come out of the 2003 DPW budget and will pay for site prep, planning, and septic. We hope that we won't need to use the entire \$75,000 DPW allotment. Our committee started working last May with about \$55,000 already in the

shelter fund. These funds included a \$10,000 allotment from town meeting 1998; a \$25,000 leadership gift from the Joe and Billy Perry on behalf of the Aerosmith Foundation, for which we are enormously grateful; and approximately \$20,000 raised from informal fundraising efforts in the past.

Why can't the town pay for the shelter, since it's a municipal building?

The selectmen have indicated publicly on many occasions that they fully recognize the need for the shelter, and support the building of a new facility — but the money just isn't there.

How much more do we need?

\$12,000. Our committee has raised just over \$88,000 towards our \$100,000 goal. We hope to have the remaining funds raised by Town Meeting in March 2003, the town can break ground for the new shelter next summer.

How can we help?

Please make your tax deductible contributions payable to Town of Duxbury/Animal Shelter and send to the Duxbury Selectmen's Office, 878 Tremont Street, Duxbury, MA 02332.

Also, please join us for our "A Cause for Paws" reception/silent auction on February 9 to be held at the Nathaniel Winsor House from 4-7 pm. We'll be announcing more information about this event soon.